

Appendix – Individual Summaries of Prior Fire Services Reviews

1. Final Report on the Fire Services Study – Hughes, Heiss, & Associates, 1983

This report, commissioned by the Board of Supervisors listed as its major objective “to develop a plan to ensure the cost effective delivery of fire services now [1983] and over the medium and longer range”.

It looked at projected growth, the impact of that growth on fire services, and sought to eliminate duplication of effort, fragmentation, and other factors that contribute to excessive cost and inhibit fire service effectiveness; with the objective of delivering a service plan that met cost effectiveness criteria and could be implemented in the “real political world of Sonoma County.” Work was done through surveys, interviews, and questionnaires. The Fire Safety Committee, a group of fire officials in the county appointed by the Board of Supervisors, reviewed an issue list developed by this work and focused follow-up analysis. The issue list included staffing, apparatus, response policies, dispatch approaches, training programs, fire prevention efforts, finances, and call response workload.

In the first section of the report, an overview of the existing fire service system was provided. The report observed that the fire system consisted of a complex mix of largely autonomous service agencies which contains “examples of virtually every possible approach to delivering fire services. At that point there were 17 independent fire districts (9 with 1 or fewer paid staff and only 3 with sufficient paid staff for more than one person on duty around the clock), 3 County Services Areas, 3 Service Delivery Contracts, 22 volunteer fire companies, and 7 city fire departments. The volunteer fire companies were independent, not for profit organizations staffed by volunteers, financed by community contributions with some financial support from the County. The California Department of Forestry provided fire suppression services in 3 portions of the unincorporated area not in an identified County Service Area. These were the unincorporated area near Healdsburg, Petaluma, and the Airport. Call receipt and dispatch was also provided by the California Department of Forestry for the volunteer fire companies and some districts. In addition, they provided “command and coordination” for fire suppression with the volunteer fire companies and worked with them to identify needs and disperse the County’s financial support of the volunteer agencies. The County also, separately, contracted with the California Department of Forestry to provide fire suppression services to the County Service Area serving Sea Ranch. The County contracted with the cities of Cloverdale and Healdsburg to provide response to fire calls to a large area around the city of Cloverdale and the Fitch Mountain area, respectively. According to the appendix there were about 14,600 calls for service in the cities and the unincorporated area combined and 30-50% or more were for emergency medical service.

Fire services cost \$5.2 million per year in the unincorporated area (\$4.1 million of which in support of fire district operations and \$1.1 million for the non-district areas including all the contract services) and another \$5.7 million in the cities. The \$5.2 million was funded almost 50% by property taxes and local sources, about 43% from Augmentation Funds (provided by the state after the loss of local revenues as a result of Prop 13) and about 7% drawing down on district reserves. Of the costs in the unincorporated county about 35% of the costs were for staffing and 20% were for capital items such as apparatus and equipment replacement and station remodeling and construction. Of the \$1.1 million for the non-district unincorporated, about \$600,000 was spent on California Department of Forestry contracts, \$100,000 for the Cloverdale City Contract, and about \$190,000 spent in support of volunteer fire companies with for workers compensation insurance and personal and communications equipment purchases. The remainder was for the County Services Area contract in Sea Ranch and the Fitch

Mountain Area contract with Healdsburg. In addition, the report estimated that \$250,000 - \$300,000 was raised in community contributions to the volunteer fire companies.

The report concluded that call volume in most areas was insufficient to justify significant numbers of paid, full-time staff, with most unincorporated area agencies averaging less than one call per day. A high proportion of these calls involve responses to emergency medical or rescue situations and this was observed to be the most rapidly growing component of most agency's response demand. Full apparatus responses to serious calls were extremely infrequent for virtually all unincorporated area agencies. Thus most agencies relied on part-time or volunteer personnel. There were nearly 1000 part-time or volunteer firefighters listed in the unincorporated county. As a result of the infrequency of calls, especially actual fire calls, training was observed to be critically important. The report noted that one of the key planning issues was related to the extent that this part-time/volunteer system would continue. "Additionally," it says, "the entire fire service system needs to be evaluated from the perspective of its success in insuring a 'healthy' environment for maintaining successful volunteer/paid-call participation in fire service delivery." But it went on to conclude that "There are no apparent significant indications that volunteer participation is a problem in most areas of Sonoma County." This is contrasted with other areas of California and the nation. Many agencies had waiting lists or reserve forces to fill slots on the active volunteer or paid-call firefighting force. Further most chiefs interviewed indicated that they were able to muster sufficient personnel during both daylight and evening hours to handle calls, though some had more difficulty during the daylight hours. In addition, turnout for training drills and other events were reported to be at relatively high levels but there were some individual examples of turnout problems noted. The report noted that the County had formally recognized the importance of volunteer companies and provided financial support for a portion of volunteer company operations.

The report also concluded that there is a large inventory of facilities and apparatus support for operations. This was attributed to the fact that each agency independently pursues the development and maintenance of the needed infrastructure to deliver fire services in their areas. While there is a network of both formal and informal mutual aid agreements for operations, individual jurisdictions acquire sufficient apparatus, stations, and staff, to deal with "virtually all problems could occur within their boundaries". 53 stations (32 full service) and 227 apparatus were identified in the unincorporated area but the report also noted that there were several departments operating with virtually no station facilities or inadequate station facilities. The report went on to note that while the fleets have been configured on a stand-alone basis without considering the numbers and types of pieces available for support from neighboring jurisdictions and while the total size of the fleet is impressive, its age configuration posed a problem considering the financial issues facing a good portion of the system, with more than 50% exceeding 15 years in age. More than half of the volunteer fire company fleet was over 20 years of age. The report noted that major requirements for funds would be needed for future capital replacement if the current operating approaches are continued.

The report noted that communications and dispatch approaches differed sharply countywide and that it mirrored the autonomous approach taken by agencies to deal with fire problems within their jurisdictional boundaries. This was seen to have an impact on staffing patterns and expending resources to cover call taking and dispatch for relatively few calls for service. Further there was little or no automatic response for mutual aid, only on demand. Both the lack of automatic mutual aid response and centralized dispatch were identified as major contributors to the maintenance of the significant apparatus fleet and personnel component of the fire service system.

Training and Fire Prevention Programs were noted to be uneven in scope and quality. Fire prevention programs and resources were not positioned to moderate development impacts, with limited training and experienced personnel, no common enforcement approach countywide, and a variety of codes, some outdated, especially in the non-district areas of the unincorporated county. In addition, while most agencies were moving to update their overall training programs, there was little look at standardization which was concerning to the report writers given the potential to increase joint jurisdictional response in the coming years. Standards for training and participation levels suggested that there was a broad spectrum of training quality as well. The report concluded that training should also be viewed as a major potential issue.

The report writers made use of a questionnaire sent to about 1,100 potential respondents both fire fighters and district directors. The 28% that responded were confident that their agency could recruit and retain adequate volunteers, train adequately, and handle emergencies without back-up from external paid responders. They also felt the County could help most with financial assistance, the establishment of a consolidated dispatch and full-time staff to design and provide training programs. The report also noted a common thread in the responses involving the importance of local autonomy and local identity to the successful functioning of their individual fire jurisdictions. This was identified as a major strength of the existing system and a factor which contributed to the ability to recruit and retain dedicated personnel.

In the second section of the report, key planning assumptions and key improvement issues related to system cost effectiveness were highlighted.

The report concluded that projected growth patterns would not dictate major changes in the composition of the fire service system in the 5 to 10 year future. It suggested that current and future improvements should focus on steps to maintain a strong paid-call/volunteer system. It did note that the cost for providing service was relatively high at \$38/call/per capita, comparable to costs observed in areas of urban service levels with 24 hour paid staffing and 3 minute response times. This in spite of the fact that only about 50 personnel in the system were paid (exclusive of the winter season or Schedule A resources contracted from the California Department of Forestry). The report concluded that a proliferation of equipment, large numbers of paid call firefighters who needed to be compensated for calls and trained and insured, and operating insurance for a large apparatus fleet all contributed to the high cost of the system. The report went on to say that most districts and volunteer companies had far more manpower and equipment than would be required to deal with current and likely future service demand, citing that in most instances individual departments were organized and equipped to deal with major service demand regardless of the resources available to their neighbors a few miles away and that this was probably the single most important contributing factor to the high cost.

The report noted that there was little indication that most agencies were seriously considering and change to the status quo of autonomous, stand-alone operations. "Thus while much lip service is paid to joint action, any planning which is currently taking place consistently points to continuation of the individual agency approach..." Further, few resources were devoted to elements most critical to the maintenance of a healthy paid-call volunteer system in the unincorporated area. The report noted that there were 2 problems with the resource allocation system: special district augmentation funds were allocated in proportion to pre-Prop 13 tax rates as compared to the total tax dollar, perpetuating funding patterns in place before Prop 13; and resources under the direct control of the County were not being channeled to areas which would enhance system effectiveness. The report noted in Sonoma County, unlike in other areas of California, the special district augmentation funds were not being used

to effect change and improve operations in the fire service system. Items noted where these resources could be better used included ensuring common approaches and reasonable levels of firefighter proficiency, ensuring consistent fire prevention approaches were taken to moderate impact of future development, and unifying disparate agencies to provide an integrated approach to responding to all emergency incidents. The report further noted that as configured there was no agency with sufficient "clout" to improve coordination among existing agencies and improve levels of cooperation.

The report also pointed out that there were 3 areas of service patterns with questionable cost effectiveness. These were: Schedule A service from California Department of Forestry in the unincorporated area; the contract with the city of Cloverdale which the report represented an inequitable sharing of cost from the County perspective, and the allocation of resource to the Sea Ranch Fire Service Area appearing to be inequitable when viewed from the county-wide fire service perspective. The issue with the Schedule A service had more to do with the locations protected versus the Schedule A model which offers winter season coverage while summer season coverage is provided by the State. The report noted that the Schedule A service tended to support some of the most capable volunteer companies and offered little help for some of the more distant companies and suggested that perhaps contracts with neighboring districts would be a better use of funds. The concern raised about the contract with the city of Cloverdale was that the contract funded 64% of total operating costs for the department while accounting for 27.5% of the call workload and primarily to the periphery of the city. The observation regarding the allocation of resources to the Sea Ranch related to the distribution of special district augmentation funds proportionate to pre-Prop 13 levels while the call volume remained very low, comparable with other volunteer fire company served areas.

The report noted that virtually all elements necessary to support an integrated response approach were absent in the county. The elements identified as missing were: centralized and coordinated command and control; a response system based on running cards ignoring jurisdictional boundaries for dispatching apparatus and personnel to deal with major fire incidents; central dispatch; agreement that such a system made sense and is cost effective in the long range; staff and other resources for consistent training and tactical approaches; leadership and central authority and responsibility to implement and maintain such a system, and a financial resource allocation system which supports the integrated response approach.

The report noted that 4 distinct areas required further evaluation to enhance the cost effectiveness. These were: the impact of integrated response implementation on workload, budgets, and future capital replacement for individual fire agencies; the organizational and staff alternatives for providing central services; the steps that could be taken to implement the integrated response system, and the steps to be taken to reduce or eliminate inequitable service delivery situations in the various areas of the County, including the practical level of service which ought to be provided to the Geysers Geothermal area. The report defined the type of service level the County should support was paid-call volunteers throughout with an acknowledgement that while resources should be allocated to maintain that system it should also be an integrated response system with support station networks, apparatus fleets, and personnel resources consistent with the needs of an integrated response system. Some adjustments would need to be made for differences in call volume and service demand and where individual jurisdictions require service levels, apparatus fleets, and staffing beyond the requirements of the integrated response then these levels should be paid for through incremental revenue generation at the individual community level. The report noted that usually service levels are defined by response times, impact on ISO grading scales, among other things but that the diversity of the unincorporated area made it impossible to define common service levels in these usual terms. Thus the report's

recommendations were structured to: maintain existing response times and within those response time parameters ensure resources necessary to handle a structure fire. It was assumed that service would be provided largely by part-time or volunteer staff and a key focus would be to ensure that these staff were trained and supported to deliver the service.

The third section of the report evaluated service alternatives.

The report concluded that a single, countywide fire department was not recommended for the short or medium term since there would be a large amount of political resistance and, given the relatively limited numbers of paid staff in the system, most of the economies of scale and operating improvements could be achieved through other approaches. Establishing an integrated response system, adjusting the apparatus and personnel consistent with the system, and using the discretionary and augmentation funds to leverage changes would likely achieve the same improvements possible with a consolidated department. The report noted that having a central dispatch system and automatic response policies; increased standardization and quality in training; and central staff to work with individual agencies implementing the integrated response plan would be necessary implementation steps.

The report estimated that nearly 20% of the total volunteer/paid-call staff and nearly one third of the apparatus fleet would not be needed with an integrated response plan that ignored jurisdictional boundaries. This was estimated to equate to a \$236,000 operating expense reductions and an annual reduction of \$200,000 - \$250,000 in annual capital replacement expenditures, though these would not happen immediately and would provide some resources to assist with other recommended costs such as those for needed central services. The report listed the following objectives for the central service organization: central authority and accountability to provide the Board of Supervisors with expert advice and counsel; support and help ensure the quality of local fire services; consistent training program content and performance levels for fire service staff; uniform application of a reasonable fire prevention program, and central maintenance for apparatus fleet; and central dispatch. This was estimated to need 14 full time staff and an additional 1.5 during implementation. The report looked at two options for the central organization, contracting with the California Department of Forestry and creating an organization in the County and concluded they would cost about the same at about \$336,000 to \$389,000 annually. There were advantages and disadvantages identified for each relating to county control, ease of implementation, ability to recruit for appropriate skilled personnel, and overall coordination of fire matters.

The report also analyzed three alternative approaches for providing central dispatch, combined with ambulance dispatch vs fire only with the California Department of Forestry and fire and ambulance dispatch provided by the Sheriff's Office. There were advantages and disadvantages identified for each, largely relating to integration of responses, professional fire personnel handling the dispatching, upfront and ongoing costs and savings, location, and potential resistance to change. Estimates of operational costs ranged from \$147,000 to \$246,000 annually. The report also dispensed with some potential barriers including concerns about the then upcoming implementation of 911, control of dispatch vested in an elected official, and fire service receiving less than adequate dispatch from law enforcement, each of which the report concluded were not founded in fact.

The report further analyzed alternatives to the then existing Schedule A contracts in the Petaluma, Airport, and Healdsburg areas concluding that more cost effective contracts could be reached with neighboring agencies for much of the service. The report also suggested renegotiating the contract with

the city of Cloverdale and modifying the existing Schedule A contract in the Sea Ranch area to provide for a full-time year-round captain working a regular week and working with coastside agencies in addition to the Sea Ranch volunteers. The report suggested that if contracts could not be negotiated with neighboring agencies as noted, then service should be provided with volunteer/paid-call resources in those areas similar to the service levels provided elsewhere in the unincorporated county through additional County Service Areas.

The report also reviewed the fire protection issues and alternatives in the Geysers Geothermal Area, looking at: wildland/brush fire protection, structural fire protection both in construction and in operation, hazardous materials, emergency medical services, and rescue operations. The report noted that the development of new and renewal steam sources was likely to continue and that there should be shared responsibility for fire agencies and the industrial operators of the facilities. The fire agencies included two Lake County fire districts as well as the California Department of Forestry but the report concluded that the Cloverdale Fire Department would not be able to provide practical response even with road improvements that were planned at the time. The report contained a number of suggestions for coordination between the industry operators and the existing fire agencies and recommended that service for the entire Geysers Area be planned together as one area, despite the fact that it included parts of two counties. There were suggestions for different models, full-time and volunteer, centralized and decentralized, with costs and advantages and disadvantages noted for the various alternatives and ultimately concluding that the Lake County fire districts would provide the staff and equipment for major fire or accident situations.

The report also advocated for a revised approach to allocating fire service funds. It noted that under the then current system, there was no attention paid to inter-jurisdictional issues in the allocation process and no one (other than district boards) was analyzing budgets to ensure that expenditures were consistent with a cost effective fire service system. Further no centralized view was available. The report noted that if the Board of Supervisors wanted to move to the establishment of a countywide fire service system, they would need to take steps to exercise a measure of centralized budgetary and expenditure control. Central control of the special district augmentation funds was seen as the best way to move toward exerting central control for a coordinated system. With this, the report noted, there would also be a need for definition of roles and responsibilities: a fire safety coordinator with overall administration for of the budget process with the Board of Supervisors and the County Administrator and a reconstituted Fire Safety Committee. The Fire Safety Committee would have the responsibility for providing guidance to the Board of Supervisors on key fire service budget and resource allocation policy issues and have specific responsibilities for: defining call demand workload levels to justify one or more full time paid staff at the local agency level; reviewing and prioritizing capital equipment replacement; reviewing service contracts, and making recommendations about countywide base fire service funding levels.

The countywide base service level would be tied to call volume, would be consistent with the integrated response system, and would be funded by property taxes, the County funds historically provided to support volunteer company operations, and a portion of the special district augmentation funds. The remainder of the augmentation funding would be used for the central support coordination and a capital replacement fund for adequate facilities and apparatus. Local agencies would have the option of securing additional funding through fees and/or formal establishment of revenue generating entities to provide for additional levels of service above the base service levels. The budget process would involve agencies requesting funds for operating at the base service level consistent with the integrated response

plan and, separately, major capital items. Requests would be reviewed by the fire safety coordinator, the fire safety committee and channeled to the Board of Supervisors through the County Administrator.

The last section of the report provided 5 recommendations pulling from the previous sections. First, a clear policy should be adopted by the Board of Supervisors incorporating objectives related to service delivery, service levels, and resource allocation and utilization. The 5 objectives listed were: the system will be based on paid call and volunteer fire fighters; through allocation of available resources the County will support the system in all areas and where communities desire greater service levels they have the option to raise the resources locally; the County will provide those umbrella services necessary to ensure maintenance of the effective paid call/volunteer system and these services will focus on ensuring local agencies are capable of accomplishing their fire protection missions and not providing suppression resources to supplant local agency and area responsibilities; the Board of Supervisors will support codes and ordinances and fire prevention programs which control and mitigate development impacts on local area fire service requirements; and resources will be allocated and programs supported to reduce duplication of effort and fragmentation of approach in the countywide fire service network.

With these objectives as the basis, the Board of Supervisors should reduce resources under the direct control of the Board allocated to the provision of direct, paid, fire suppression services in the unincorporated area and transition these resources to the delivery of centralized services to support the paid-call/volunteer system such as central coordination and advice to the Board, central support staff to assist local agencies in fire prevention, training, and apparatus maintenance, and central dispatch. The Board should also implement a revised system for resource allocation to support the above and eliminate service inequities through renegotiation of contracts and reallocation of augmentation fund resources. The report noted that it would probably be necessary for the Board of Supervisors to “front” the central support costs before efficiencies can be achieved but that in the third year approximately \$700,000 annually would be available for system improvements.

Second, the report recommended central staff coordination, management, and support should be provided by contract with the California Department of Forestry since it was felt that the County would have difficulty recruiting key management and staff positions while the California Department of Forestry offers career development opportunities for staff and has a large potential staff resource pool. Also, with its state role in wildland fire protection, the Department of Forestry would be in an ideal position to improve the coordination and joint functioning of the entire fire and emergency service system in the county. The report noted that this assumed the Department of Forestry would be willing to transition its contract roles in this manner.

Third, steps should be undertaken simultaneously to revise the approaches to fire suppression service delivery in those unincorporated areas not served by a district or volunteer company. These include the contract negotiations with the cities of Healdsburg, Petaluma, Cloverdale, and districts to cover neighboring areas more cost effectively as discussed in the earlier section. In addition, explore the potential of annexing the then growing unincorporated area of Windsor into Rincon Valley Fire Protection District or forming an independent fire district there.

Fourth, consolidate fire dispatch at the Sheriff’s dispatch center.

Fifth, install the recommended approach for resource allocation, particularly with the augmentation funds and adjust services in the Sea Ranch and Geysers Geothermal Areas as discussed earlier. In addition, defer any expenditures related to additional station construction and major new apparatus purchases until the integrated response system has been established.

The report also contained appendices covering: cost, staffing and apparatus data; service demand/call response data; training and fire prevention; dispatch system and approaches; and illustrative equipment and staff allocations under an integrated response plan.

2. Analysis of Fire District Sphere of Influence Issues – Hughes, Heiss, & Associates, 1984

This report was commissioned by the Board of Supervisors in 1984 to look at ultimate fire district spheres of influence and boundaries, following the comprehensive fire service system study produced by the report writers the year before. It looked at both existing districts and many existing volunteer fire company areas in order to provide a full picture of boundary recommendations and included additional recommendations with respect to the formation of new independent districts or potential annexations of areas consistent with the recommendations of their prior report on the fire system as a whole. The report notes that while the previous report was endorsed both by the Board of Supervisors and the Fire Services Committee, implementation of key recommendations: an integrated dispatch and response system; and changing the approach employed to allocate financial resources -- including establishment of an overall county fire service umbrella organization with dispatch, training and fire prevention support, and an establishment of a base service level -- were under debate and development and had not been resolved at the time of this report's writing. Also key was the recommended reduction of direct fire suppression services by the County and the transition to provision of overall coordination and support. It stated that "the ultimate fate of these recommendations can have major impact on sphere of influence and annexation policy".

The approach to the report was to survey the individual agencies studied to determine plans and opinions about future service boundaries and to confirm many of the details about each agency that had been gathered previously and were required for sphere of influence studies by state statute. Volunteer Fire Companies were also asked about future plans to form a fire district or other governmental agency to provide fire service. The report also took into consideration the following when addressing potential boundary limits:

- The potential ability of an agency to absorb an additional area without major expansion of fire protection resources.
- Consistency between the district and adjacent areas in terms of population density, number and types of structures under fire protection, geographic characteristics of the area, land use (agricultural, rural, urban, etc.).
- The impact of territory annexations on the fire service delivery system currently in place including: impact of annexation on volunteer companies in the area, particularly with diminishing an agency's capability to generate financial resources to critical levels jeopardizing the ability to provide services; and the potential, through annexation to improve fire service levels by placing current volunteer services under professional district management and administration.
- The consistency of proposed ultimate district boundaries with area growth and development patterns.
- The consistency of proposed ultimate district boundaries with maintenance/improvement of service levels to the area in question, measured by factors such as response times, units able to respond, quality of facilities and apparatus, and staff training levels.
- Geographic and road links (current and future conditions).
- Historical, non-quantitative factors (e.g.: lack of community rivalries within the area, socio-economic/demographic/geographic links between areas, etc.).
- Future population growth and development, particularly when development would require a significantly different level of fire service than then currently provided.

Further the following basic issues were identified as questions to attempt to answer when forming the recommendations:

1. What will the revenue transfers be as a result of annexation?
2. Should revenue transfer be based on a comparison with the incremental cost of providing service to newly annexed areas?
3. To what extent is the revenue base available to support the County's umbrella fire system diminished?
4. Should there be "new" or additional stand-alone fire agencies?

The next section of the report provided individual summaries and recommendations by district and volunteer agency reviewed with the projected fiscal impact of those recommendations. If all the annexation and agency formation recommendations occurred, the report noted the following annual monetary results:

- \$126,000 property tax funds could be transferred to existing districts or new agencies.
- \$126,000 in augmentation funds could become involved depending on allocation policies adopted by the Board of Supervisors.
- Thus in total \$252,000 could be reallocated to existing districts or new agencies, however:
 - County direct support (in then current Schedule A contracts with the California Department of Forestry) could be reduced by roughly \$310,000-\$320,000.
 - County expenditures on workers' comp. and vehicle insurance would drop by \$34,000 annually.
 - Therefore there could be a net increase of \$100,000-\$200,000 to support "umbrella" fire services support services depending upon the policies for use of augmentation funds.

For the purpose of this summary, the then current service area configuration and the district or agency cost and service delivery information have been omitted. Most of this information reflected a recap of information collected for the prior report and, presumably, updated and confirmed for this report. The authors did not identify where any significant changes had occurred or needed to be made to the information in the prior report. The remaining individual agency findings are summarized below:

- Bellevue Fire Protection District
 - Rev Source: Prop Tax plus Special District Augmentation Fund. No Fire Service Fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: Unincorporated area outside Santa Rosa's sphere of influence and west of Santa Rosa are comparable to current Bellevue Service area in terms of composition and fire service requirements and extension of Bellevue's services into a portion of these areas will replace the resources lost by Bellevue FPD through annexation by Santa Rosa. Southwest Corner of existing Roseland FPD falls between proposed extension area and existing Bellevue area. As the remainder of Roseland is absorbed by Santa Rosa, Bellevue would be able to transfer some incremental revenue from service maintenance perspective, provide the area with reasonable response, and facilitate extension of service.
 - Reduce the County's requirement to directly support fire services from Airport area.
 - Impact: A second Bellevue Station would have to be established w/locally recruited volunteer force. Residents would experience more rapid response.
 - Other issues: Bellevue FPD at its Prop 4 limit and for Bellevue to expand, the Prop 4 limit would need to be increased.

- Bennett Valley Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: No extension
- Cazadero Community Services District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: Canyon area to the east and west of Austin Creek, boundary of the Monte Rio FPD to the south, and by a line 1.1 miles north of the fork in Austin Creek. The service impact would be minimal since the district already responds to these areas.
- Cotati Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: No extension. Possible adjustment with integrated response would be Bellevue responding to “northern island” otherwise possible annexation of this area to Bellevue due to existing response patterns.
- Fitch Mountain County Service Area #24
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Contracted with the City of Healdsburg for first response fire suppression services. CSA #24 pays \$500 a month for the contract, plus actual costs incurred for responding to calls.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: No change as the current boundaries already within Healdsburg’s.
- Forestville Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund and fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: Extension of natural boundary limits in the north and northeast.
 - Service Impact: No staff or station addition needed.
 - Cost-revenue Impact: No significant incremental cost.
 - Other Issues: A 2/3 approval of the fire service fee would need to be achieved in conjunction with or as part of the annexation process.
- Glen Ellen Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: Glen Ellen has an automatic response agreement with the Mayacamas VFD during the weekdays and they also provide service to a small county unincorporated, non-district area directly west of station #2. As a result, since Glen Ellen is already providing service to these areas, these areas should be under Glen Ellen.
 - Service Impact: Require maintenance of volunteer force in the Mayacamas area.
 - Other Issue: Apparatus would need to be stationed in the Mayacamas area.
- Graton Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: No extension.

- Guerneville Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. Fire service fee which complements property tax and related revenues.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: Area in between Guerneville's eastern and Forestville's western boundaries. Also, area between the northern district boundary and the major ridgeline to the north.
- Hessel Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax only
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: No extension, though some consideration was given to including the Bloomfield area, not recommended due to insufficient property tax and augmentation fund resources that could transfer to pay for service extension requiring additional facilities and/or apparatus.
- Jenner and Bodega Bay Coastside Area
 - Rev source: (then only volunteer company related, no direct property tax)
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: *Bodega Bay*: form fire district bounded to the north from Cliff Ave and Shell beach Sheep Ridge on the east; and to the south by the Marin County line. Ensure formation proposal contains provisions for incremental revenue generation beyond property tax transfer and a Prop 4 limit sufficient to support a capital improvement program. *Jenner*: Defer formation of any district until result of prior County Fire Service Study is determined with respect to ability to support volunteer fire companies. If local residents still wish to pursue agency formation, pursue County Service Area rather than district and include provision for incremental revenue generation such as fee or property tax increment as condition of formation. The distinction between why district and county service area is recommended for each does not get spelled out though there is a reference to a district relating to increasing urbanization of demand for services. The report also addresses some territories in the Jenner area in dispute for sphere of influence between neighboring agencies. The resolution of this dispute for the recommended configurations was based upon a survey of affected area residents and in both cases the areas were assigned to Jenner's neighbors.
- Kenwood Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: Only potential expansion area is the largely undeveloped area to the north of District's existing boundaries.
- Monte Rio Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: No extension
- Occidental and Camp Meeker Area
 - Rev source: (then only volunteer company related, no direct property tax)
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: no recommended district or agency formation, in the event such formation does occur for Occidental, ensure condition to allow for revenue generation above property tax transfer.

- **Penngrove Fire Protection District**
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: The unincorporated periphery of the city of Petaluma and external to Petaluma sphere. Include Wilmar volunteer company area but not Two Rock volunteer company area.
 - Other Issues: Wilmar residents against the Penngrove sphere of influence so report poses question about what services outside Wilmar area, the volunteer company would be prepared to offer, particularly without then current Petaluma area Schedule A contract with California Department of Forestry. Offers alternative of Wilmar Division of Penngrove FPD in order to preserve local identity as a volunteer force would need to be maintained in the area even if annexation occurred.
- **Rincon Valley Fire Protection District**
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. Fire service fee to supplement property tax and augmentation fund revenues.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: Non-district unincorporated area to the west of the city of Santa Rosa. Area north of the Rincon Valley Fire Protection District. Also, largely undeveloped area on the western portion of the district.
 - Other Issues: Some residents believe the annexation could result in ineffective response times. Report recommended Rincon Valley maintain apparatus and locally generated volunteer force in the area served by the Alpine volunteer company as potential condition under annexation in order to overcome resistance and maintain reasonable response times.
- **Roseland Fire Protection District**
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. A fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: Same as current boundaries with potential annexation discussed above for a portion of the district to Bellevue.
- **Schell-Vista Fire Protection District**
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: No extension though noted potential to extend southeast to vicinity of Lakeville.
 - Other Issues: Mission Highlands subdivision area residents had interest in higher levels of service and provision by city of Sonoma. Report recommended against detachment and annexation to city due to impact on district finances and current status of prior fire study report recommendation implementation. Offered opportunity for area to form zone of benefit in the district and finance a higher level of service to be provided by city under contract to district.
- **The Sea Ranch County Service Area #6**
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: The Gualala River/Mendocino County line to the north. Gualala River to the east. Horseshoe Cove to the south.
- **Timber Cove County Service Area #25**
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.

- Recommended Sphere of Influence: North on highway 1 to Horseshoe Point. Current County Service Area #25 boundaries to the east. South: a line running from Pacific Ocean through Meyers Grade Road at the Black property.
- Other Issues: Availability of insufficient revenue and expenditure limits (Prop 4) led report to recommend election to raise the limits.
- Twin Hills Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: North of Burnside and Bloomfield Roads, South of the existing district boundaries. A limited area in the vicinity of Jonive School.
 - Impact: Third Fire station would improve response time.
- Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District
 - Rev source: Property tax plus special district augmentation fund. No fire service fee.
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: No extension
- Windsor Area
 - Rev source: Served by Volunteer Department
 - Recommended Sphere of Influence: Form a new Fire District, or provide services through County Service Area #9. (Extending the Rincon Valley Fire Protection District boundaries did not appear to be a logical alternative for resolving future fire service needs in the Windsor area, nor does providing fire services through the Windsor Water District Financing Vehicle.) District was preferred option due to projected increased growth in area.

The report also included the following policy recommendations in light of the potential shift in overall County fire service policy as per the prior report:

- The report noted that “one of the major problems associated with the existing fire service system is the proliferation of independent agencies which make coordination, equalization of service, and the improved cost effectiveness of fire service delivery difficult”. Therefore:
 - Resist forming new fire agencies unless these clear criteria are satisfied:
 1. Area in question faces rapid transition in service demand which dictate service levels different than those provided at that time.
 2. The current service system is inadequate (or will shortly become inadequate) to meet fire needs, including consideration of support either currently or potentially received from the “umbrella” County fire service support system.
 3. There is an evident need for local control of development from the fire protection perspective. For example, major development will clearly exceed local fire protection capabilities in the absence of mandated built-in protection.
 4. Proposals need to include a provision for sufficient continuing revenue generation capacity to meet both current and projected demands without outside subsidies.
 - Avoid district to district territory transfers until the integrated response system is resolved.
 - Encourage Prop. 4 limit increases in selected districts, especially when annexation would result in expanded responsibilities and when boundary expansion provides no practical opportunity to resolve revenue problems.

- Do not automatically allocate augmentation funds upon annexation or district formation, treating each proposal on a case-by-case basis to leverage boundary changes and district formations consistent with the overall County fire service policy. Suggested guidelines include: encouraging annexation of areas which would diminish County's direct fire suppression responsibility; discouraging formation of new agencies where such formation runs counter to countywide fire protection system organization goals; consider impact on resources available to County to support "umbrella" services as proposed in the prior study; consider the cost-revenue trade-off involved in proposals; and the financial status of agencies involved including the capability to extend service without full utilization of potential property tax and augmentation fund resources.
- Do not partially absorb volunteer company service areas; absorption should be all or nothing.
- Encourage district consolidation as a long-term policy. The report noted current sentiment did not exist for consolidation and desires for local control, community rivalries, and other factors posed substantial barriers to forced consolidation. The report asserted that over the long run it was important for the Board of Supervisors and LAFCO to support district consolidation and suggested that if the integrated response system was implemented and functioned effectively, the climate for maintaining autonomy might change.

The report also contained appendices containing the sample survey questionnaires and the property tax and augmentation fund implications of potential annexations and district formations.

3. Formation of County Services Area 40 – 1993

The following is a summary of various elements of a number of documents involved in the formation of County Services Area 40 in 1993. The goal in reviewing this set of documents was to learn what was the state of fire services in Sonoma County at the time to the extent this information was included in the different documents; what was intended by the formation; and what conditions, restrictions or other guidance was included in any of the formation documents.

A proposal included in a package date stamped March 29, 1993 states:

“The County of Sonoma is pursuing a county-wide County Service Area to provide multiple extended powers of the County to the unincorporated areas of Sonoma County. The project is proposed to be completed in three phases because of a cost and time savings factor.” It goes on to note July 1, 1993 for completion of phase one, September 1993 for phase two, and April 1994 for phase three. Phase one is identified as “reorganization of areas of unincorporated Sonoma County excluding fire protection districts and community services districts having fire authority into a single County Service Area having the power to exercise structural fire protection.” Phase two would reorganize further and amend the powers to include water, sewer, lighting, and parks with fire becoming a zone in the county service area that would not overlap existing fire districts. Phase three, which was optional, would be to consider working with the cities on a total countywide service area including the incorporated areas and amend powers and proposed new zones of benefit as desired.

The proposal included a description of the services then currently provided to the unincorporated areas of the county excluding legal fire protection districts and community services districts with fire authority. The services included emergency 9-1-1 dispatch, contractual fire suppression, fire prevention, fire investigation, administrative services and support of volunteer fire companies. The support for the latter included providing: all safety clothing, pagers, hand held and portable radios, hepatitis B vaccinations, workers compensation insurance, small tools, some fire hose, air packs, oxygen resuscitators, and extrication tools. The County operated 3 fire engines that were used to replace broken volunteer equipment and respond to mutual aid calls. The County maintained inventory of equipment, maintained the equipment, tracked exposure to volunteers, provided fire training to all volunteers (3 hours per month per volunteer) and sponsored volunteers to national fire training. The County also provided an officer or officers from staff to provide overhead services to emergencies. Investigation of all fires and transmission of reports to the state were also provided. The intent was stated as “to provide all fire service and support necessary so that community volunteers need just to respond to emergencies”.

Funding for the then current program was identified as 3 cents on each tax dollar paid and fees for building permits and planning referrals. Program revenue was noted to have suffered losses due to annexations and declining geothermal revenues for the past 5 years. In addition, in the current fiscal year, it was noted, the state had shifted 35% of the property tax base to schools. The then current County Service Areas only shifted 10% of a base year budget to schools but had been unable to spend total received revenues due to Prop 4 limits. Then current proposals by the state, might have the effect of shifting 55% to 100% of property tax revenues to schools in the next fiscal year.

The proposal noted that a method to take advantage of legislation designed to protect fire districts and address the Prop 4 limit problem was to reorganize all the existing County Services Areas and the unincorporated area outside of them (excluding districts) into a single county-wide County Service Area.

This reorganization would also exempt the new agency from participating in the Special District Augmentation Fund which was not then a benefit to dependent districts. This action, it was asserted, would allow a stable funding source for continuing fire protection services. The proposal went on to say that existing County Service Areas would retain their boundaries as zones of benefit in the new County Service Area and their funds would remain intact. It was asserted that the Sea Ranch and Timber Cove areas would actually gain since their Prop 4 limit would be raised allowing them to access available revenues. Further, independent fire districts would not be impacted by the reorganization and formation of the new County Service Area would not change the then current County policy of encouraging fire districts to consolidate and annex unincorporated County area into new districts. It states: "the formation of CSA 40 along with the suggested reorganization of independent districts may lead to five or six fire agencies in Sonoma County in the near future. Some independent districts expressed concern over the Countywide CSA overlapping the independent districts thus phase one was created to honor their request not to overlap." It was noted that volunteer fire companies had written letters of support as the best alternative for their areas to pursue.

On March 23, 1993, the Board of Supervisors adopted a resolution (93-0402) that requested LAFCO to take proceedings to reorganize and form County Services Area 40, eliminating structural fire protection from existing CSA's 6 (Sea Ranch) and 24 (Fitch Mountain) and dissolving CSA's 25 (Timber Cove) and 39 (Cloverdale). This resolution (and other subsequent resolutions and actions along the way to complete the formation) specified that CSA 40 would be the successor in interest to all of the former CSA's (or fire related obligations of same), would receive the then current monies on hand and revenues, and would allocate those from the former CSA's (or the fire related portions thereof) to new zones of benefit created with boundaries coterminous with the former individual CSA boundaries. In addition, property tax revenue for fire received outside of those boundaries in the unincorporated area and excluding that going to independent fire agencies, would go to CSA 40. New appropriations (Prop 4) limits would be established.

Other documents in the formation materials indicate: twelve public meetings were scheduled in April and May 1993 to discuss the CSA 40 proposal; the purpose of the project was to create a secure long-term funding mechanism for the provision of fire protection services and allow for a continuation of these services in a cost-effective manner without a lapse in coverage; the project consisted of the reorganization of approximately 100,000 acres, creating a county-wide service area providing fire protection services to those areas of the county currently provided with fire protection services under contract by the County or by volunteer agencies; no operational or service delivery changes were being considered as part of the proposed CSA; Emergency response was then being provided by 23 Volunteer Fire Companies in the bulk of the area, with approximately 350 volunteer firefighters in these companies and operating a variety of structural fire engines, wildland fire engines, rescue trucks, water tankers and chief vehicles; and fire protection was also provided by contract with California Department of Forestry in Sea Ranch, Cloverdale Fire Department in the north county, and Healdsburg Fire Department in Fitch Mountain. In the LAFCO staff report, it was noted that the Fire Services Director estimated that without other funding sources the level of fire protection services in the unincorporated areas would decrease quickly and appreciably.

4. Fire and Emergency Services Study for Sonoma County – Citygate Associates, 2001

This report was commissioned by the Board of Supervisors on behalf of interested fire agencies with the understanding that financial pressures were facing all of them, particularly with increasing standards and call demands, the transitioning of dispatch costs, concerns about recruiting and retaining volunteers, and revenue growth that was not sufficient to meet these issues. There were two goals:

1. To provide participating entities with individual feedback that they can use to make individual decisions regarding themselves.
2. To provide the Sonoma County Board of Supervisors with overall information on current conditions and standard practices in the fire service.

Of the 48 separate fire agencies noted by the report as listed in the California Fire Service Directory in Sonoma County, 12 independent fire districts (Bennett Valley, Cloverdale, Forestville, Glen Ellen, Goldridge, Kenwood, Rancho Adobe, Rincon Valley, Russian River, Schell-Vista, Valley of the Moon, and Windsor) and the 15 volunteer fire companies through County Services Area 40 participated.

The report looked at the most recent three years of data, the current budget, and extrapolated projections for a two years into the future. The agency data was collected individually and returned to each agency with data that had been averaged based upon similar size agencies so that each agency could review its information against the averages for similar size agencies as well as those for agencies of different sizes. The data was averaged for three groups, small, medium, and large agencies and overviews of those averages were published in the report and used for analysis. Schell-Vista, Bennett Valley, Glen Ellen, and Kenwood were in the small agency group and CSA 40 data was averaged with this group where appropriate. Forestville, Cloverdale, Gold Ridge, and Russian River were in the medium agency group and Windsor, Rancho Adobe, Valley of the Moon, and Rincon Valley were in the large agency group.

The second section of the report contained tables and graphs for summaries of services provided, population, average population by district size, population density, and area protected, revenue mix, average total revenue, average revenue per capita, ratio of property and special taxes, average revenues from fees and permits, fees and permits as a percent of total revenue, average total expenditures, average per capita expenditures, personnel costs as a percent of operating expenditures, and average cumulative fund balances. This section of the report also looked at four components of revenue reductions and charges that have impacted the participating agencies including: the impacts of ERAF, tax administration charges, fire revenues lost to redevelopment, and the costs of dispatch.

The next section reviewed the services, activities, and responses provided by the agencies participating in the study in order to identify what might require modification as demands on the fire service grow and evolve. Included were tables and charts on workload, staffing configurations, descriptions of paid, volunteer, and combination departments, response time goals, and staffing configurations for the small, medium, and large agencies. This section also identified issues associated with growing from a small to a large agency. Annual operating costs were identified by group and a discussion of distribution and concentration of fire stations was also included. The report also looked at mutual and automatic aid agreements, the manner in which effective response forces are provided, problems agencies are experiencing in maintaining volunteer personnel, and the ability of agencies to meet mandatory training requirements. There was a discussion of standards, particularly Standards of Cover considerations and models from which rationales for response time standards are derived and their implications in when

determining locations for stations and staffing deployment. Finally, a chart of ISO ratings in various parts of the county was included.

The final section of the report provided additional information based upon the report writers' observations. The report identified three major trends: budgetary issues, staffing trends, and transition management.

Budgetary Issues:

- The #1 issue for every department interviewed was lack of adequate property tax revenue. Revenues are increasing by a rate mostly impacted by the growth of assessed valuation and permits. Revenue growth is slow.
- True revenue growth is slow.
- Expenditures are increasing each year in response to level of service changes. (Including State-mandated costs.) Control of expenditures is a key issue with many agencies.
- Personnel costs are impacted by both State and Federal mandates.
- Capitalization, which deals with both fire stations and fire apparatus, is linked to the condition of reserve funds.

Staffing Trends:

- Volunteer retention is "very significant."
- The fire chiefs interviewed felt they needed to increase their present staff levels due to the increase in emergency responses, but were unable to due to revenue limitations.
- 7 volunteer issues common across districts:
 1. Volunteers work outside of the fire district.
 2. Cannot afford the high cost of housing within the district. (Paid personnel dealing with this, too.)
 3. Difficulty in meeting the increase in alarms.
 4. Other social and family issues are placing demands on the volunteer's time.
 5. Some volunteers have found full-time firefighter positions in other departments.
 6. Mandated training takes too much time and is too costly.
 7. New residents not interested in being volunteers.

Transition Management (volunteer to full-time staff):

- Many departments are exploring their options that include a transition to full time staff.
- The participating agencies all face increasing pressure on the triggers and thresholds for increased demand for service.
- The revenue picture for the participating agencies points to a combination fire force. However, managing a combination fire force is more difficult than managing either a totally volunteer or full-time force.

Other trends and observations included:

- Cooperation among fire districts is excellent.

- While the report writers were asked at the outset not to raise any issues with respect to consolidation most of the chiefs who were involved with the study expressed their sense that consolidation with neighboring districts will occur in the future, particularly with the potential for continuing revenue shortfalls. The report notes that the track record with consolidations has had successes and failures. In addition, while initially consolidation was seen as smaller organizations forming into larger ones, now there are all types of functional consolidations and shared services in places. Sonoma County was observed to have several examples of this itself.
- Dispatch and administration costs were observed to be a part of doing business and appropriate. There was also hope expressed about the potential for improved dispatch services that was then currently underway.

The report indicated that the County and the Fire Districts should place a priority on implementing a strategic or master planning process. The report also included an action plan with the following recommendations:

- Each agency should develop an assessment of the demographics of their community and track new construction and traffic changes in their community. Further they should measure fire risk in their community.
- Each agency should have a pre-fire emergency planning system (like the Risk, Hazard and Value system from the CFAI).
- Each agency should adopt a policy (guidance) with regards to reserve funds.
- Divide reserve funds into dedicated reserves (for amortization of rolling stock and capital intensive equipment) and unrestricted reserves.
- Joint effort of all to create a countywide public awareness campaign on the need for volunteers.
- Each agency should adopt a standardized set of performance measures. Develop written response time goals and develop a system to measure performance.
- Each agency should provide fire stations with emergency power provisions.
- Each agency should create an Apparatus Replacement Schedule, and review every budget cycle.
- Each agency should conduct an annual review of all departmental goals and objectives (financial and fire suppression program) and review baseline and benchmark performance measures.
- Fire Chiefs Association should pursue more proactive approach to obtain local legislators to author legislation that would assist local fire agencies.
- Fire Chiefs Association should create management information systems that track individual firefighters and the department as a whole with respect to state and federal mandated duties.
- County Fire Chiefs should better understand the fees for administrative and payroll services.
- County should establish a standard response time goal for CSA 40 departments in order to ensure future development is evaluated against objective standard particularly for future fire station location determinations.
- County should incorporate time measurement into future modifications of the communications center records management system.
- County and Fire Chiefs Association should incorporate local agencies into the GIS and Fire View software for analyzing incident location, risk, hazards locations, and infrastructure elements.
- Fire Chiefs Association should provide volunteers with a length of service program, and training opportunities.
- Joint effort of all to develop a stronger cooperative training program and joint purchasing power.

The report also contained appendices providing additional information on response time thresholds, mandates and NFPA standards, the methodology of the study and other references and resources.

5. Fire Protection Service Providers Municipal Service Review – Economic and Planning Systems, 2005

This report was prepared for LAFCO to address one of its major new responsibilities per state law in 2000: the preparation of a comprehensive regional study of municipal services every 5 year. These reviews must address at least the following nine factors:

1. Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies
2. Growth and Population Projections
3. Financing Constraints and Opportunities
4. Cost Avoidance Opportunities (identifies eight opportunities for cost avoidance)
5. Opportunities for Rate Restructuring
6. Opportunities for Shared Facilities
7. Government Structure Options
8. Evaluation of Management Efficiencies
9. Local Accountability and Governance

In addition to service issues specific to each fire protection provider (18 independent fire protection districts, 2 community service districts, and 6 cities comprising the local government service providers in the County), the Municipal Service Review included some look at the dependent County Services Area 40 and the California Department of Forestry noting their roles as significant providers in the county, and identified a number of service issues applicable to fire protection generally in Sonoma County. These issues, and potential actions to help maintain and improve fire protection in the County, are repeated from the report's summary of findings below.

1. There is a significant diversity of fire protection and emergency services demands and circumstances throughout the County.

Fire protection demands vary greatly given the diversity of land use intensity and the large rural portion of the County. The urban areas, primarily the incorporated cities, concentrate service demands in a relatively contained geography making fire protection services efficient. The less densely populated rural residential and rural portions of the County are much more difficult to serve efficiently because of the travel distances between homes and businesses and fire stations, and the lack of water infrastructure. Because of this diversity there will always be a significant variation in the level of fire protection service that can be provided. Going forward it will be important to provide better public information and education regarding fire protection services, including costs, funding, and service standards, throughout the County. A better educated public will be more willing to support changes needed to sustain and improve fire protection and emergency medical services.

2. There is ongoing fiscal stress on fire protection services associated with continued manipulation of local government funding sources by the State.

Ever since the adoption of Proposition 13 in 1978, fire protection services, especially the fire protection districts, have often lacked adequate fiscal resources. The ongoing fiscal crisis at the State government level and the related ERAF (the state-mandated Educational Revenue Augmentation Fund) property tax re-alignment has worsened the situation for many fire districts. Some cities and districts have responded by gaining voter support for special assessments and taxes, although others with similar service demands have failed to do so. In addition, there is often wide variation in the tax rates allocated to fire protection agencies by various tax rate areas in Sonoma County, resulting in further differences in the taxes collected by those agencies. As a result, in Sonoma County there is significant variation in the resources available to the individual fire protection agencies and these differences ultimately result in

variations in levels of service. Even in the better-funded agencies, costs of fire service, driven by increasing employee-related costs and continuing growth and demands for service, are increasing faster than the underlying revenue base, causing continued stress.

3. Sustainability of volunteer-based fire protection services is threatened by demographic changes.

The rural fire protection agencies have historically depended upon volunteer fire fighters. The use of community-based fire fighters has been a benefit to the community, providing a cost-effective way of providing fire protection and also engendering a focus of community activity and identity. However, ongoing changes in the rural portions of the County, including the loss of resource-based jobs, high housing prices and a general aging of the population, have reduced the ranks of potential volunteers. The fact that volunteers increasingly work outside of their communities has also reduced the resources available to the volunteer fire departments. Given that the cost of supporting a volunteer force is based upon the number of volunteers enlisted, it is getting to the point where a full-time paid staff may become necessary to maintain service levels.

4. Growth and increasing demands for service have reduced service standards in some areas.

While overall growth in the County has been modest in recent years, some communities continue to grow briskly. There has also been a proliferation of exclusive homes in rural portions of the County that are very remote from the nearest fire station. New development generates new demands for fire protection service, and unless this growth provides a proportional increase in fiscal resources, fire protection services will be increasingly challenged to maintain existing service levels.

The increasing gap between expenditures and available revenues ultimately translates into a declining ability to provide adequate services. This situation, in turn, could lead in some cases to increased insurance costs to businesses and residents. In extreme cases, new development may not be able to proceed if the fire agency cannot commit to provide service. This issue is particularly problematic where the agency permitting new development is not the same as the fire protection agency (e.g., cities provided fire protection service by a special district).

5. The existing number and configuration of fire protection agencies may be less than optimal.

The 20 existing fire protection entities have historically provided fire protection services to their communities and have also been a focal point of community identity, involvement, and local governance. However, ongoing fiscal stresses and opportunities to reduce unit costs and improve services make increasing cooperation and reorganization compelling. While consolidation may not be appropriate in all cases it should be considered as one means to sustain and improve fire protection services under specific circumstances.

6. The central dispatch system and the activities of CSA 40 provide examples of functional consolidation that have served the County well and could be considered for other services.

The central dispatch system (Redwood Empire Dispatch Communications, or REDCOM) is a cooperative effort among the County's fire protection agencies. This system has reduced cost to the taxpayers and improved services. CSA 40 provides an organizational framework for 15 of the rural fire protection districts, including budget control, overall management oversight, and equipment and facility funding. There are a number of other opportunities that could also be considered for regional cooperation and/or functional consolidation that could provide economies of scale and reduce costs, including fire

fighter training and equipment acquisition. Funding initiatives may also enjoy a greater likelihood of success if initiated on a regional basis.

7. LAFCO and fire protection providers in the County should continue to cooperate in seeking opportunities to improve services in the County.

Currently, LAFCO provides technical and support services to local fire protection entities seeking to reorganize. LAFCO's role could be broadened to facilitate investigation of specific reorganization opportunities or regional cooperation efforts in order to improve services while maintaining the local control and community-based volunteerism which are the strengths of the current system of fire protection in Sonoma County.

Further, the report noted that reorganization has the potential to improve fire protection services and offered the Orange County Fire Authority as an example. The report also noted opportunities for regional cooperation to address issues identified in the Municipal Service Review and suggested more detailed analysis should be pursued to further clarify ways that agencies could work together to maintain and improve services. Regional sales tax measures, impact fees, and special taxes were identified as possible ways to address current funding inadequacies, while automatic aid was mentioned as one of several factors determining whether a community can achieve a "rural 5" ISO rating which in turn can reduce fire insurance costs to residents. Later, as a part of the individual agency determinations, the report identified additional opportunities for reorganization and cooperation for many of the agencies reviewed.

The report next offered an overall discussion of the fire service providers describing governance and operations covering personnel, mutual aid and funding; infrastructure, facilities, and services; and service demand and capacity. For personnel, the report observed that most districts have small numbers of paid staff and varying numbers of volunteers while cities tend to have larger numbers of paid staff but most also rely on volunteer contingents as well. All departments have some form of mutual aid agreements with adjacent jurisdictions and/or the California Department of Forestry. Most participate in REDCOM, the joint powers authority created to provide fire and ambulance dispatch services in the county.

The report provided the following related to funding: Most districts depend on small shares of the property tax, collected in the district, which can be affected by changes in governance; e.g. when unincorporated territory served by an independent fire protection district is annexed by a city, the fire district transfers the property revenue it was receiving from that piece of land. While annexation may result in a reduction of direct service responsibility, if fixed overhead and staffing costs cannot be reduced by an equal amount, adverse financial impacts can result. Many districts also collect special taxes which, in some cases, are charged according to a fixed cost per unit while in other cases, based upon a cost per "unit of risk," with different numbers of units assigned to various types of structure. Revenue losses due to ERAF and local redevelopment areas have increased financial pressures on districts. The resulting dependence on special taxes, which can be increased only through ballot measures, often makes it difficult to raise funds for needed improvements as facilities age. Equipment purchases have been funded by grants but these funds are competitive and not guaranteed. Some districts also receive impact fees for development but not all and this issue was expected to be raised with the Board of Supervisors later in the then current year. While almost all of the districts had reserve funds, they varied in magnitude and the report noted that as a general rule, general reserves should be at least 5 percent of expenditures. Cities, it was noted, have a variety of revenue sources.

Infrastructure and facilities, the report pointed out, varied widely among districts and cities. Each agency had at least one fire station and multiple vehicles. Many districts had informal capital improvement plans but a general lack of funding limited acquisitions and upgrades. Some facilities were shared. City departments tend to serve relatively contained areas and districts often provide service to large rural areas with varying levels of infrastructure and development. As a result, service levels vary. The report described how ISO ratings are determined and provided a table of then current ratings.

For fire protection service demand and capacity, the report noted: A few providers were experiencing significant population increases (then current and future situations in Cloverdale, Cotati, Windsor, Sonoma and Petaluma were discussed), in general, few others anticipated major growth in the near future. Nonetheless, many agencies were experiencing staffing problems including daytime volunteer coverage and attracting and retaining volunteers. Cooperative arrangements with other agencies and “sleeper” programs were mentioned as ways to mitigate some of the problems. Yet the need to comply with safety regulations, especially the “two in/two out” requirement, were identified as presenting challenges.

After these overall observations, the report then discussed these areas: governance and operations covering personnel, mutual aid and funding; infrastructure, facilities, and services; and service demand and capacity; for each of the individual agencies providing then current descriptive data about each.

Next the report explained each of the following nine determinations that must be made with respect to each of the agencies and what goes into consideration for each determination:

1. Infrastructure Needs and Deficiencies
2. Growth and Population Projections
3. Financing Constraints and Opportunities
4. Cost Avoidance Opportunities (identifies eight opportunities for cost avoidance)
5. Opportunities for Rate Restructuring
6. Opportunities for Shared Facilities
7. Government Structure Options
8. Evaluation of Management Efficiencies
9. Local Accountability and Governance

After the explanation, the report provided each agency’s nine determinations though some are null values (e.g.: “No changes...”, “No new opportunities...”, etc.) and none of the determinations for number 4 specifically addressed each of the eight opportunities for cost avoidance identified.

Some of the issues raised in the report are listed here by agency.

- Bodega Bay Fire Protection District
 - Increasing financial pressures, high debt, and a lack of reserve funds could make it necessary for the District to consider possible consolidation or other cooperative arrangements in the future.
 - In January 2005, the boards of directors of BBFPD, Russian River FPD, and Monte Rio FPD voted to pursue possibilities relating to the consolidation of their districts.
 - To attract and retain employees, the District may need to increase wages as much as 20 percent in the near future, which would require an increase in tax revenue. If taxes are not increased, the District will be required to decrease its level of service or seek alternative

cost-saving measures over the next two to three years. The District's lack of reserve funds could make this situation especially critical.

- **Cloverdale**
 - The City of Cloverdale is among the fastest growing communities in Sonoma County. Increases in the demand for services have made it difficult for CFPD to provide adequate fire protection. Additionally, CFPD does not get pass-through funds from property taxes on areas annexed by the City, but instead receives a fixed amount, unadjusted for inflation or growth.
- **Forestville Fire Protection District**
 - The District's lack of general reserves may hinder its ability to respond to unanticipated needs or emergencies. While a past consolidation effort by the District failed, FFPD has not ruled out the possibility of cooperative arrangements with other jurisdictions.
- **Glen Ellen Fire Protection District**
 - In 2005, the District's chief expressed concern that, in the long run, the high cost of living in Glen Ellen may deplete the volunteer pool and compromise the District's level of service, but did not anticipate that this would become a problem in the near future.
- **Gold Ridge Fire Protection District**
 - A replacement program is intended to ensure that equipment is kept up-to-date but has been unfunded for eight years as funds have been shifted to staffing.
- **Monte Rio Fire Protection District**
 - The District has three stations, located in Monte Rio, Duncans Mills, and Jenner. Two of these stations are 50 years old. Although the District believes they should be rebuilt, it lacks the necessary construction funds
- **Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District**
 - The District faces staffing shortages but lacks the funds to hire additional full-time permanent firefighters. The termination of the District's contract with the County may also affect staffing issues.
- **RINCON VALLEY FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**
 - Of RVFPD's four fire stations, three are aging and too small to accommodate current staffing requirements. The District lacks the necessary funds to expand these stations. It has discussed the possibility of sharing one of its stations with the City of Santa Rosa.
- **RUSSIAN RIVER FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**
 - The District faces staffing shortages that may compromise its level of service as demand increases.
 - All three buildings in the district require extensive remodeling.
 - Two of the three ambulances are generating extremely high maintenance costs and need to be replaced.
- **TIMBER COVE FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT**

- The District needs a Type III Wildland engine and has unsuccessfully made three attempts to apply for FEMA grant money in order to purchase one. TCFPD has also applied for FEMA funding to pay for personal protection gear. Funding for these purchases is not available in the District's regular budget.
- VALLEY OF THE MOON FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
 - While the District does not anticipate any major growth within its service area, its low level of general reserves (under 5 percent) may make it financially vulnerable.
- WINDSOR FIRE PROTECTION DISTRICT
 - WFPD maintains two fire stations, only one of which is staffed. The unstaffed station was built in 1967, primarily for use as a garage. However, this station's location has grown increasingly important. The District is divided by a freeway and railroad tracks, with calls for service split evenly between its two sectors; in order to provide adequate response to both these sectors, the District needs to have equipment and staff distributed throughout its service area. The District tried for a special tax increase to pay for additional employees to staff its second station; but it failed. In 1999, the District initiated plans to replace its unstaffed station, including arrangements for a property trade with the Town of Windsor. However, the project stalled due to lack of funds.
 - Between 1990 and 2003, the Town's population increased by over 100 percent, going from 12,000 to 25,000, while calls for WFPD services went from 1.4 to 4.4 per day. According to the District, current staff levels are not adequate to meet demand.
 - The town has a 486-acre redevelopment area, in which the most common style of new building is a three-story structure with commercial space on the bottom floor and residential on top. WFPD does not have the equipment or staff to respond to a fire in this type of structure; it has no aerial ladders, and it often lacks the four firefighters required to enter a burning structure under the "two in, two out" state policy.
 - In recent years, the District's budget has been unable to accommodate these new demands for expanded staff and equipment. WFPD's special tax rate of \$68 per household has not changed since it was first passed in 1986 despite increases in operational expenses. The District reports that tax revenue from the Windsor Redevelopment Area, formed in 1984, is often extremely low, since all taxes on new assessed value (i.e., value acquired since the formation of the RDA) go to the redevelopment agency. According to the District, this results in a situation where the Fire District may receive almost no taxes on a property that requires full fire protection services.

City Fire Departments

- HEALDSBURG
 - Staffing levels have not increased since the 1970s, despite significant population growth. Much of the new growth in Healdsburg is occurring in areas more than 1.5 miles from the existing fire station (the distance recommended by ISO).
 - The Department also hopes to explore ways to restore the Fire Marshal's position (currently unfunded) and add a full-time Training Officer's position to better fulfill increasing training requirements.
- PETALUMA

- It hopes to replace its 22-year-old Brush Rig in the near future; however, an attempt to fund this purchase through a FEMA grant was not successful.
- The Department's other two stations (Station 2 and Station 3) are both in need of renovation.
- **ROHNERT PARK**
 - Currently, all of the City's fire stations and suppression equipment are located on the east side of U.S. 101. Only two routes offer access to the west side of the City, and heavy traffic flow during peak commute hours and weekends significantly increases response time to that area. Commercial and residential projects planned for the west side of Rohnert Park are expected to contribute to the demand for services. To meet this increased need for fire protection service, fire division staff has determined that an additional staffed Public Safety fire station and training facility, equipped with a ladder truck, must be built on the west side of the City. Efforts to identify an acceptable parcel of land for this facility are ongoing.
- **SANTA ROSA**
 - Inadequate facilities, aging equipment, and insufficient funding have made it difficult for the Department to maintain a high level of service in recent years. These challenges were reflected in the findings of the 2004 Sonoma County Grand Jury.
 - The Santa Rosa Fire Department responded to 16,970 calls in 2003, a 4 percent increase over the previous year and 66 percent increase over the last ten years.
 - According to the Department, the remaining two reserve engines are being overused. In addition, two deteriorating front-line engines should be downgraded to reserve engines and replaced.
 - The Department's facilities have not kept pace with the City's growth in recent years. A recent study The study recommended the relocation of fire stations 5, 6, and 8 and the construction of new stations in three locations.
 - According to the findings of the 2003-2004 Sonoma County Grand Jury, Santa Rosa fire protection service is not meeting current demand.
- **SEBASTOPOL**
 - While the Department's facilities, equipment, and staff are adequate to meet current demand, anticipated growth and aging among the existing population may create a future need for increased full-time staff.
 - The addition of at least one full-time position may become necessary in the next five years. There is no funding currently available to pay for new staff.
- **SONOMA**
 - New high-density, multistory development in Sonoma may require specialized equipment that is not included in the Department's current capital replacement plan.
 - The General Plan's increasing emphasis on high-density development may create demand for new types of fire protection service. Buildings of more than three stories, for example, will require a taller aerial ladder than the one the Department currently owns. The Department's existing aerial ladder is only halfway through its lifespan; as a result, the capital funds required to pay for a replacement have not yet accumulated.

The report contained two appendices. The first listed examples of consolidations and reorganizations of fire protection services in California. The second was a memo which the report writers offer to outline

some next steps, particularly with respect to how LAFCO could help sustain the effectiveness of fire protection services in Sonoma County.

The memo noted that fiscal conditions of nearly all agencies were deteriorating due to costs rising faster than available revenues and opportunities to improve efficiencies were essential to maintaining or improving fire protection services. Higher levels of cooperation and further consolidation should be considered. Also, keep the report up to date and targeted analysis of specific options, with consultants specializing in fire protection analysis to study geography of existing station and equipment deployment may be needed. Other areas of potential additional analysis may include emergency medical services in relation to fire protection and the conversion from volunteer to full-time fire fighters.

The memo also suggested establishment of a LAFCO Ad Hoc Committee of Fire Chiefs and representatives should identify and evaluate cooperation and reorganization options; first strategic objectives and limitations should be established; then geographic distinctions should be described; then options generated and evaluated; then select a preferred strategy; then conduct community workshops to present the selected strategy; then initiate action; and ultimately LAFCO consider any reorganizations. The memo pointed to a role for LAFCO staff to assist, noted consultants may be helpful in some areas, and cautioned that the public education was very important.

6. Fire Services Studies of CSA 40 for the Department of Fire and Emergency Services – ESCi, Fire and Emergency Services, and Fire Steering Committee, 2009-2012

In 2006, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services began a process of more thoroughly analyzing and developing strategic planning materials for County Services Area 40. The set of documents produced: the CSA 40 Analytical Review (2009), the CSA 40 Volunteer Firefighter Resource Manual (2009), the “Vision 2020” Strategic Plan (2010), and the Standards of Coverage for Emergency Response (2012), taken as a group, outline a significant advancement in the development of Sonoma County’s firefighting system for those unincorporated areas not covered by an independent district. These documents are briefly summarized individually below.

CSA Analytical Review 2009

This report provided a comprehensive overview of the organization and fire service system then in place in County Service Area 40 and concluded that it was a cost effective way to provide services but needed to take several actions to survive in the short term, stabilize and become sustainable in the mid-term, and become strategic in the long term. “The service delivery system is in need of significant enhancements; however, it provides an effective platform from which services can be provided.” The identified issues, in descending order of importance, were money, recruitment & retention of personnel, vehicle replacement, training & mandates, motivated leadership, station replacement, local control, the relationship with CAL Fire, and distrust.

The review identified the following strategic initiatives:

- Improve communications
- Improve the decision making process
- Adopt performance measures for emergency response
- Deal with infrastructure issues
- Deal with external influences
- Complete integration of VFCs and CSA 40
- Identify and utilize creative solutions

And the following 8 strategic goals:

1. Basic HR principles establishment: span of control, delegation of authority, chain of command, etc.
2. Establish a funding base.
3. Establish an interest-based facilitation process to improve cooperative and collaborative activities.
4. System for recruiting, rewarding, reinforcing, and retaining volunteer firefighters.
5. Interagency relationship support system.
6. Volunteer training environment upgrade.
7. Facilities upgrades.
8. Fire apparatus system, in terms of response and replacement.

The review also listed potential incremental benchmarks of success for each volunteer fire company:

1. Department is legally established and has mission, goals and objectives
2. Department has response goals for emergency operations consistent with level of risk in the community
3. Department has policy, practice, and procedures to set and implement programs to mitigate main risk
4. Department is substantially in compliance with mandated duties
5. Level of effort (funding) is consistent with comparable communities in regional, state, and national databases
6. All members of department are trained to meet national standards
7. Fire losses are within community expectations and are acceptable.
8. Firefighter injury is very low.
9. ISO class is reduced where possible
10. Department's physical infrastructure is reliable and well maintained

The report noted that roles and responsibilities needed to be more clearly defined and structured and offered some suggestions with respect to some of the roles and responsibilities including those of the County, the Department of Fire and Emergency Services, the volunteer fire companies, and those that were shared.

The report noted a trend statewide for regional approach to fire services and explored a wide variety of topics from a best practices or options available perspective including issues associated with staffing, facilities, apparatus and equipment, funding sources, training, overhead costs, the value of volunteer time, the transition of staffing models, and 12 different potential service delivery system scenarios. The report also mentioned that initial attack areas were being created within CSA 40 through a combination of response patterns and contracts and notes that "everything that is done to support the solidification of these attack areas moves the organization in a positive direction."

The report provided 48 recommendations with timeframes of immediate to within 10 years with an estimated cost and identification of responsible party to complete. The report was accepted by the Board of Supervisors in August 2009 and the Department of Fire and Emergency Services was directed to develop an implementation plan for the recommendations.

CSA 40 Volunteer Firefighter Resource Manual 2009

The manual provided references and resources including: glossaries, histories, where to find key grant information and where to find a guidance document to help write the grant, cost recovery ordinances for motor vehicle accidents, materials handler information, statutory, regulatory, and safety rules and changes that have impacted operations, and volunteer best management practices. It also provided an overview of how a change in ISO's Public Protection Classification (PPC) can affect commercial insurance premiums as well as good suggestions with regards to training in the responses from the volunteer survey.

This manual was produced at the same time as and as a companion to the analytical review of CSA 40.

Sonoma County Fire and Emergency Services Department "Vision 2020" Strategic Plan, 2010

This document was prepared as an implementation step with respect to the recommendations of the CSA 40 Analytical Review. The plan was prepared with the assistance of a Fire Steering Committee dealing with five categories of issues: Governance, Standards of Coverage, Operational Management,

Capital Investment Planning, and Funding. The strategic plan called for a Standards of Coverage plan to define the future organization. The intent was to provide basic standards intended to deliver high quality fire and emergency services for a rural area and outline specific goals and objectives to be achieved over the next 10 year period, defining how the department will be structured and operated by the year 2020. Ultimately, the objective is to ensure adequate resources, training, equipment and leadership.

The plan had a vision statement: "Provide high quality fire and emergency services with professionalism, commitment, and integrity in delivering services to our citizens, neighbors, and visitors with excellence"; a mission statement: "The Fire and Emergency Services Department is committed to providing exceptional service dedicated to protecting life, property, and the environment"; and an organizational vision: "Provide community based fire and emergency services as a combination department of career and volunteer staff committed to delivering professional service".

The plan also identified 3 value statements with respect to customer service, professionalism and dedication to excellence. Under Governance and Administration there were 5 objectives and 8 action steps identified for the next 10 years with specified benchmarks over the following 2 years. Under Standards of Coverage there were 6 objectives and 5 action steps identified with one benchmark, the completion of the Standards of Coverage Plan in 2011. Under Operational Management there were 7 objectives and 8 action steps identified with benchmarks out to 2014. Under Capital Investment Planning there were 2 objectives and 4 action steps and benchmarks to 2014. Under Funding there were 3 objectives and 4 action steps with benchmarks to 2012. Under ISO rating there were 2 objectives and action steps each and benchmarks to 2016. The plan also provided a connection to each of the Analytical Review recommendations under each of the 5 categories of issues, tracking that all were to be addressed by the strategic plan.

This plan was accepted by the Board of Supervisors in October 2010.

Sonoma County Fire and Emergency Services Department Standards of Coverage for Emerg. Response, 2012

As noted above this document was intended to be the key to defining the department's services for the future. It proposed establishing a performance standard of the first unit responding to an emergency call should arrive within 15 minutes of dispatch at least 80% of the time and noted this was consistent with national standards for rural areas similar to CSA 40.

It was described as "a rational and systematic way of looking at the basic service provided by an emergency services agency". The purpose was to provide a system which will assist with:

- Assessing community fire and non-fire risks
- Defining baseline and benchmark emergency response performance standards
- Planning future station locations
- Determining apparatus and staffing patterns
- Evaluating workload and ideal unit utilization
- Measuring service delivery performance
- Supporting strategic planning and policy development relative to resource procurement and allocation

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The key elements in the development of a Standards of Cover were noted to include:

- A community risk assessment identifying the fire and non-fire risks common and/or unique to the agency completing the process
- A determination of levels of service to be provided within the area served
- An analysis of the agency's current response capability in terms of time and on-scene performance for personnel, and equipment
- A development of standards describing how the agency resources shall be allocated and deployed to maximize emergency response effectiveness throughout the area served.

In addition to establishing the performance standard, other highlights of the SOC included:

- Risk Assessment: County Fire should have the capability to respond to all risks (fires, medical emergencies, hazardous materials responses and natural disasters) within the established performance measure criteria.
- Fire Stations: The County's 18 current fire stations provide effective coverage, and future locations will be determined based on the Standards of Coverage analysis.
- Staffing: The use of volunteers as primary responders is appropriate given the current volume of calls, but there is a need for additional volunteers to reach the optimum staffing of 300 from the current level of 230.
- Apparatus: While all of the VFCs have fire apparatus to support their responses, much of the equipment is outdated and there is no vehicle replacement program.
- Performance: Overall, the system meets the recommended performance standard by responding to over 80% of calls within 15 minutes of dispatch. Compliance varies within the County, with 9 of 15 Fire Service Areas meeting the standard.
- Funding: There is a need for additional funding to meet the performance standard, as well as for capital needs such as fire station improvements, maintenance, and apparatus throughout County Fire CSA 40.

The following recommendations were also made:

- The County CIP program should address fire protection facilities' needs. Permanent and adequate fire stations are necessary and recommended as a top priority capital improvement project. Permanent fire station locations with appropriate capabilities need to be provided in Annapolis, Lakeville, San Antonio and Two Rock. The Sea Ranch's north fire station needs to have living quarter renovation completed allowing the contracted paid fire company to move from "rented" space at The Sea Ranch Cal Fire station.
- County Fire should continue to implement paid augmentation of busier volunteer companies (FSAs with call volumes of 200+ calls/year). A variety of volunteer firefighter non-resident programs, sleeper programs, or paid per call and stipend programs, should be considered to augment fire station staffing to improve response times.
- Implement a capital investment funding program for replacement and maintenance of fire apparatus and equipment required to provide basic services as defined in the SOC.

- Implement improved recruitment and retention programs for volunteer firefighters. This may help to improve the number of volunteers not only in the more suburban areas, but also in our more rural FSAs.
- Collect incident response time, type and location data by map page so additional analysis can provide response time goal performance by each map page.
- The Standards of Cover process is the most effective tool to quantify service levels and assign corresponding cost commensurate with the desired level of service. The planning process is systematic and comprehensive so that decisions for service levels are based upon facts pertaining to delivering services. The community's expectation for the type and quality of service provided by County Fire is defined by the SOC for the County Board of Supervisors to review and approve.
- Continue working with other fire agencies to build and improve service delivery collaborations that include possible consolidation.

With suggestions for further study:

- Complete time-of-day analyses that include review of actual first responding company in each FSA or Integrated Response Plan area (IRP).
- Complete review and update of IRP agreements.
- Attachment 1 – 9/18/2012 Standards of Coverage 8
- Consider funding alternatives to enhance fire protection above the basic level describe in this Standards of Coverage.
- Review and analyze the contracts for paid companies and consider implementing County Fire paid/volunteer firefighter-staffed 24-hour fire companies.

This report was accepted by the Board of Supervisors in September 2012.

7. Municipal Services Review for Fire Services – LAFCO Staff report, 2013

This report is a staff report on the next municipal services review with respect to fire protection services after the one conducted in 2005. It was presented in March 2013.

8. Summary

The report identified several options for regional cooperation and reorganization, as well as ideal regional delineations for the next Municipal Service Review using the zone delineations in use by the fire agencies at that time.

The report suggested better public information and education, because a better-educated public will be more willing to support changes needed to sustain and improve fire protection and emergency medical services.

The report identified consolidation discussions which occurred between the Russian River, Monte Rio, and Bodega Bay Fire Protection Districts. The report mentioned that the discussion of consolidation never made it beyond the study stage.

The report mentioned a 3-step plan to consolidate resources and expand service delivery in the Northeastern section of the county (Zone 6).

The report mentioned a successful Joint Powers Agreement between Rincon Valley and Windsor Fire Protection Districts, creating the Central Fire Authority of Sonoma County and the agreement between the Valley of the Moon Fire Protection District and the City of Sonoma creating the Sonoma Valley Fire and Rescue Authority.

Potential annexation, reorganization, and district formation activities are noted in Zones 3 and 4.

The report also noted that in Zone 9, the Rancho Adobe Fire Protection District, required additional funding or a substantial operational restructuring and in Zone 5 there were some significant capital facility needs for two districts estimated at \$7.5 million.

After a listing of these updates, the report noted that much of the preliminary work for the next municipal service review had been completed and staff was looking for direction as to whether organizing the remainder of the review by zone was acceptable and direction as to which Zones to begin with. The report recommended that, at a minimum, Zones 6 and 9 should be the focus of Commission review.